

SPEECH

OF

HON. RICHARD YATES,

DELIVERED IN THE WIGWAM, AT THE SPRINGFIELD

JUBILEE, NOVEMBER 20, 1860.

FELLOW-CITIZENS:

We have had a splendid triumph, and we have met to rejoice over it. We rejoice, not with vindictive triumph over our opponents, but in the success of principle. We desire not to make them feel bad, but for ourselves to feel glad. Say no hard things against them, for their cups is full and running over. (Laughter.) We rejoice because we have had a solemn and deliberate verdict of the American people in favor of the great, the undying principle of human liberty. (Applause.) We have had a hard struggle; we have had to meet misrepresentation and falsehood—a base perversion of the platform and designs of the Republican party; but they have fled before us as the prairie fires are driven before autumnal winds when the grass is dry, and now our banners stream aloft like a flame far up in the sky, and float majestically on the breeze and the storm. (Applause.)

Our victory is thorough, ample, complete. Why, we have carried the Legislature, the State, and the Nation. (Applause.) Up to '58, Illinois was the banner State of Democracy, and rolled up her majorities by uncounted thousands. In '58 we carried the popular vote for Lincoln—but by reason of unfair apportionment, our opponents had the Legislature; but now, in spite of unfair apportionment and gerrymandered districts, we have carried both branches of the Legislature. (Applause.)

Now one of the results of this will be, that the Legislature will, at its next session apportion the legislative districts on the principle of fairness, and thus transfer the power from one third, to a majority of the people, and from "Egypt to Israel." (Laughter.)

Another result: By the recent census, Illinois will be entitled to about six Representatives increase, so that the State will have fifteen Representatives in Congress. Now we must be fair to our Democratic friends, and we must give them at least three Democratic districts down in lower Egypt; (laughter) good and strong ones, so that they will have no doubt of their undoubted democracy. (Laughter and applause.) Now we can be kind in this respect, and still have twelve Congressmen left to bear aloft the Republican flag, and give their support to Abraham Lincoln's Administration. ("Good," and applause.)

I confess my heart is full, when I refer to another result of securing the Legislature. I refer to the triumphant restoration to the Senate of the gallant, the eloquent, the noble Trumbull. (Loud applause.) Trumbull was one of the pioneers in the Republican ranks. He left a pampered and victorious party and united with a small minority for the sake of principle. No man was ever the victim of more shameful abuse or personal insult than Lyman Trumbull, but no man has more nobly vindicated his course, or more proudly borne aloft the Republican banner than Lyman Trumbull. (Loud applause.) He has reflected credit upon himself, and lustre upon his State; and in all the grand tournaments of Senatorial debate he has shown himself the peer of the proudest Senator and the ablest statesman; ("that's so," and applause), and if Democratic leaders, quailing beneath the power of irresistible logic, or writhing beneath his withering sarcasm, have ardently prayed for his defeat, millions of freemen in Illinois and throughout the land, will hail the restoration of Lyman Trumbull to the Senate of the

United States as one of the proudest trophies of this most glorious campaign. (It is impossible to describe the tumultuous applause which followed these remarks of Mr. Yates as to our able Senator.—Ed.)

We have also carried the State ticket. We shall still have the pleasure of shaking by the hand our faithful and accomplished Secretary of State, O. M. Hatch, [applause,] our sagacious and efficient Treasurer, Mr. Butler. [Applause.] We will still look upon the broad honest face of Uncle Jesse [applause] our noble and well tried Auditor, and our model School Superintendent, Newton Bateman. [Applause.] In the speaker's chair of the Senate, we shall have Francis A. Hoffman, the representative of that hardy, industrious and intelligent class of citizen who have sought our land as the asylum of the oppressed, and who may ever be relied upon when freedom calls her sons to the discharge of patriotic duty. [Applause.] As to the humble individual who is to occupy the house on the hill, I must have nothing to say, except that if you take his opponent's testimony and what friend Wentworth says, you had better believe that he is a LIVE Republican. [Applause.] To deny that he feels honored by the high position conferred upon him, would be to deny his own nature. Proud is the warrior returning from the field of his fame; so am I proud of the confidence of the people of my State in the signal honor they have conferred upon me—and prouder still that I stand up here to-night triumphant on the same principles I went down on in 1855. [Loud applause.]

We have also succeeded in the nation.—When I come to speak of the triumph of our own Lincoln, I find prose rather dry and I exclaim with the poet:

"Now is the winter of our discontent
Made glorious summer by this sun of York,
And all the clouds that lower'd upon our house
In the deep bosom of the ocean buried."

All New England has spoken. The old Keystone gives her 80,000. New York has spoken with a voice louder than the cataract which thunders upon her western border. Ohio, the first born of the Ordinance of '87, and the whole of our young but giant North West has rolled up her accumulated thousands for Republican liberty and the child of the people, Illinois' great and gallant son, Abraham Lincoln. [Long continued applause.] How has he passed through the contest?—Notice the fact, that though the records were searched, and after the strictest scrutiny by the greedy and venomous hunters of slander, he stands unscathed. The shafts of calumny and detraction lie shivered and harmless at his feet, and the character of Abraham Lincoln is as white to-day as the snow-flake ere it falls to the earth. [Loud applause.] I

like to dwell upon the events of the canvass. It was a picture for history. There sat that plain and humble man at his home in the bosom of his family, not perambulating the country "in search of his mother," [laughter and applause,] and making speeches from every hotel balcony and railroad station, disdaining to canvass for his own election; but see you not those banners fluttering along the sky, blazoned with the flaming words of Lincoln and Liberty, raised by millions of patriotic hands, and bearing to the Presidency the man whose words of living truth had impressed him upon their minds as the man for the times and crisis. [Loud applause.] And we will rejoice because he is one of our boys. ["That's so! That's so!"] And though he is to go to the White House, that shining height of human power, though you were to bind his brow with all the laurels of a Roman conqueror, or crown him with a diadem, yet, for his humble neighbor, he would ever have a warm heart and a cordial hand. [Loud applause.]

If I may be pardoned for a personal allusion, ["Yes," "yes,"] I will remark that I have some reason to remember the rise, progress and final triumph of the Republican party. The Republican party was one of the necessities of the times, as Whigs and as Democrats gave up most reluctantly the old organizations endeared to them by many hard conflicts for great principles. I had the honor of being a member of Congress during the last two years of Mr. Fillmore's administration; and during the first two years of Gen. Pierce's. There was no slavery agitation in Congress during Mr. Fillmore's administration—no sectional strife—no cloud big as a man's hand could be seen on the face of the political sky. It was not until 1854 that ruthless hands were laid upon the Missouri Compromise, and that agitation sprung up and swept the country as with the violence of a storm. Now the Republican party was born at 4 o'clock, on the 5th day of March, 1854, when the Kansas Nebraska Bill, repealing the Missouri Compromise, passed the Senate. ["That's so," "that's so."] I know it's so, for I was *there*, and though it is now only a six year old, yet all will admit what the thunder of the ballot-box has proclaimed that it is this day and hour the mightiest party upon the continent of North America. [Applause.] Multitudes of both the political parties at Washington and throughout the free States viewed the repeal of the Missouri Compromise as calculated to have the effect which Mr. Douglas has boasted it did have, to give over the Kansas Territory to slavery, and immediately those multitudes, having a common faith, began to rally under the new organization, not, it is true, for the restoration of the Missouri Compromise, but to

keep the Territory free. How it was to be made free, whether by the restoration of the Compromise, or by another prohibitory act of Congress or by such construction of the Constitution as would prevent the slaveholder risking his slaves in the territories was not then fully decided, but that free it must and should be, was the united voice and unshaken determination of the Republican party. [Applause.]

I refer to this history for this purpose: I had spoken and voted against the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, and when on my return home at the close of the long session of 1854, having published a card that I would not be a candidate for re-election, I was met at the depot in Springfield by Mr. Lincoln. He said I had taken the right course on this question, and though he could not promise me success in a district so largely against us, yet he hoped for the sake of the principle, I would run, ["That's just like Old Abe,"] and if I would, he would take the stump in my behalf. I remember his earnestness, and so deeply did he impress me that the question was one worthy of our noblest efforts whether in victory or defeat, that I consented. From the circumstances I believe that the only consideration with Mr. Lincoln was a disinterested and patriotic desire for the success of correct principle. Little did he or I then dream that for the advocacy of that principle he was to be made President of the greatest nation on earth, and his humble friend at the depot, Governor of one of the greatest Commonwealths of that nation. [Prolonged applause.] These were the circumstances under which Mr. Lincoln entered upon his great career, dreaming of no reward, save the greatest reward of the true patriot, the consciousness of duty performed to his country—he wielded his ponderous logic with such tremendous effect as to make his antagonists quail before him—he afterwards met the great captain of the pro-slavery Democracy in the grandest debates which ever occurred in the whole history of political controversy, and triumphed over him in every contest; his enunciations of Republican truths, his statesmanlike comprehension and exposition of the true policy of the country upon the most complicated of all subjects brought him conspicuously before the people; the story of his plain and simple life struck deep into the popular heart till there was a universal conviction among the people, and they felt it in their heart of hearts that Abraham Lincoln was the man for the highest office within their gift. [Loud applause.] He was accordingly nominated at Chicago as the leader of that young and giant party which from Maine to Minnesota was rallying under the standard of freedom, determined to reassert

the great principles of 1776, and to restore the Government to its original purity. On the 6th November he was triumphantly elected—and we have met to rejoice over that glorious event, and we will rejoice and be exceeding glad. ["We will," and applause.]

What are the points decided by the election of Lincoln? I answer that, the solemn verdict of the American people is, that the constitution of the United States is not a pro-slavery Constitution—that the Constitution does not place slaves on the footing of other property, and protect them wherever its jurisdiction extends; that slavery is the creature of a local law—that every man upon the footstool of the living God, every man into whom God has breathed the breath of a living soul, every man everywhere, upon every spot of this green earth of ours, is a free man until there is a law to make him a slave. [Applause.] This verdict of the people has re-affirmed the doctrine of Mr. Clay, as promulgated on the floor of the United States Senate in 1850, a few months before his death, in which he said, in substance: "You cannot lay your finger upon a clause of the Constitution authorizing the slave holder to take his slaves into a Territory and hold them there." It re-asserted the doctrine of all our Courts of all the States, slave as well as free, and of the Supreme Court of the United States, as enunciated by a Marshall and a Jay—and it has pronounced a withering rebuke upon the five slaveholding Judges of the Supreme Court, who, in the Dred Scott decision, have overturned the whole line of judicial authority of every civilized State and nation, and proclaimed the abhorrent doctrine that slavery exists by force of the Constitution, with all the elements of property in man in the Territories paramount to any popular sovereignty in the Territories, and even to the authority of Congress itself. [Applause.]

This verdict of the people has uttered a fearful warning to the miserable dynasty of doughfaces who have betrayed the free States which they represented, and has consigned to a political grave, so deep and dark that no sunlight of resurrection shall ever reach him, the man whose ruthless hand was laid upon the Missouri Compromise—

"Laden with guilt and full of woes,
Behold the aged sinner goes
Down to the regions of the dead,
With endless curses upon his head."

But above all, this verdict has decided that a construction which is favorable to the idea of freedom shall be given to the Constitution, and not a construction favorable to human bondage—it has taught us then, when we want a construction, we must go back to the men who made the constitution, to those flaming patriots who struggled round about the camps of liberty, and who fashioned and framed

ed every section and clause of that Constitution, and not to a Stephen A. Douglas, or any of the mushroom race of modern pro-slavery politicians. [Loud applause.] And, as our fathers said with regard to the Northwest Territory, and as they said with regard to our own bright Illinois, and which now stands forth in the pride of her power, with her splendid cities, with her fair cultivated fields, progressing in all the arts, beauties and refinements of civilization, with a rapidity and grandeur without a parallel—a fair daughter of the ordinance of 1787, as our fathers said Illinois should be free, so we say with regard to the Territories stretching off to the Pacific ocean, they shall remain forever free, and by the blessing of God, the clank of no slave-chain shall ever be heard upon that broad domain. [Loud applause.] This verdict of the people has decided that we will not extend an evil which has been the source of all our troubles; which has broken down all our political organizations; which, wherever it goes subverts the freedom of speech, of the press, of the post office, lights up the flame of the incendiary's torch, deluges our Territories in the blood of our best citizens, arrays the people of one section against the people of another, like hostile armies on the field of battle, and if not arrested in its wider spread, will rend our Union asunder, and tear down our political temple from "turret to foundation stone."

This verdict of the people has decided that there are other subjects which should claim the attention of the Government than those of slavery—that to elevate and dignify labor, to make it honorable, to open to it the broadest fields and the highest honors and emoluments, are objects worthy of the statesman's regard, and hence the people have decided in favor of affording protection to American industry, of giving free homes to the poor in the Territories, and of a railroad across the continent from ocean to ocean.

But we are told that the South will not submit and that the Union is to be dissolved. Do you want my advice on this subject? Then all I have to say is, keep cool. [Laughter and applause.] When the children of Israel, hotly pursued by Pharaoh and his horsemen and chariots, were encamped upon the Red Sea, they murmured. Moses said unto them, "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord." I am glad to see the Republicans cool on this question, and I infer from the tone of the press they are cool everywhere, from Old Abe down to the humblest Republican in our ranks. ["That's so," and applause.] I met a Democratic friend the other day, and he seemed to be annoyed because I did not seem to partake of the sensation. [Laughter.] So far nothing has occurred

which we had not a right to expect before the election. We knew there were classes of men in the South who were for disunion—some who desired a re-opening of the African slave trade and the diminution in the price for negroes—some politicians of the South, who, failing of promotion in the Union are hopeful of prominence at the head of a new confederacy—and a large class everywhere who are filibusters, and ready for any revolution in which they might have a chance to improve their fortunes. In the North, also, we had a long list of Democratic journals and orators, who, to defeat Mr. Lincoln's election had flooded the land and the whole South with gross misrepresentations of his opinions and designs. Then came fulminations from Wall street and heavy houses of trade in our large cities, more alarmed for the safety of Southern indebtedness, Southern trade, and the price of stocks, than for any fear of a dissolution of the Union.

I confess I have but little fears of secession or disunion. I take the bluster of a few hot-spurs of the south as but little indication of Southern sentiment. The pugnacious little State of South Carolina has been talking about disunion ever since she came into it. And though a few Senators, postmasters and judges have resigned, yet no federal law has been resisted, no fort has been seized, and the collection of the revenue has not been obstructed. The Southern fire-eaters have not yet looked all the difficulties incident to an independent national organization in the face, and have not seen, as they will soon see, that there is not an evil of which they complain which will not be magnified infinitely out of the Union. South Carolina, with scarcely more men and resources than this Congressional District; why, she would starve out; her banks would suspend; her markets would be cut off; and her people borne down by poverty and taxation too grievous to be borne, would very soon knock at our doors for re-admission into the Union.

As to a manifesto from Mr. Lincoln to quiet the fears of the South I say never, never. ["Never, never," and loud applause.] Mr. Lincoln is not responsible for the excitement. Let those who have kindled it put it out. Mr. Lincoln will say nothing to the South, which he has not already said. He will not budge from the principles laid down in his speeches and the Republican platform. (applause.) He will be mild but firm. He will have great disposition for conciliation, but none for compromise. "He will stand in courageous fidelity to the Constitution, the Republican platform and the Declaration of Independence." If the madness of ambition precipitate disunion and civil war, he can say with a clear con-

science he is in no wise responsible for it. ("That's so.") He has again and again declared that he is opposed to any interference in the affairs of the slave States; that the States are sovereign, and have the right to order and control their domestic institutions in their own way—that while he regards slavery as an evil, yet he recognizes the right of South Carolina to cherish her institution if she desires, and to hold her slaves as long as she pleases. His opinions are eminently conservative. When asked at Cincinnati how he would treat the South, his reply was, as brothers, and as Washington and Jefferson treated them; and that he advocated no principle on the slavery question which was not advocated by Washington, Jefferson and Madison. Thousands of Southern people entertain every sentiment of the Republican party: but our Northern papers, and Northern speakers have been carefully kept out of their sight. No man, no paper is allowed to speak in the South which does not denounce Republicanism as something akin to treason. Democratic orators in the North and in the South have represented Mr. Lincoln as in favor of abolishing slavery in the States; as designing a warfare upon the institutions of the people of the slave States—that he was in favor of freeing all the negroes, and for an unrestricted political and social equality of the black and white races. These misrepresentations have been quoted by Southern papers and Southern speakers until the negroes themselves began to look forward to the election of Mr. Lincoln as to a day of jubilee, and the bright vision of a happy Canaan, where they should know oppression no more, has been flitting through their imaginations. Now let those who are responsible for the excitement in the South issue their manifestoes. ("Good," and applause.) Mr. Lincoln will bide his time. He is not President yet. If the South sees fit to believe these slanders upon Mr. Lincoln's views and designs, Democratic orators and presses in the North and South are responsible for the hostile position and treasonable demonstrations of the South; and let those leaders issue their manifestoes, recall their infamous slanders and quiet the fears of the Southern malcontents, and if they will not do this let the consequences of their acts be upon their own heads. (Applause.)

Will it not be a sad commentary upon our free institutions, a sad termination of the Government of our fathers, if the Union which they formed is to be dissolved for no other reason than that the majority of the people have elected a President, whose crime is that he proposes a recurrence of those principles which our fathers, fresh from the bloody

field of the revolution, proclaimed to the American people as the true and solid basis of our national prosperity. I am for one, prepared to say that if the Union is to be dissolved for any such reason, it is time we were knowing it. ["Right," "right," and applause.] It is time the question was tested. Whether the South really intends to dissolve the Union or not, the result of the election has informed her that the independent judgment of the American people cannot be coerced by insistent threats of secession or disunion to vote for other than the man of their choice. Now the time has arrived when the American people are to know whether they are to have the President of their choice, elected in accordance with the Constitution. Let us know for once and forever whether a majority or minority shall rule? Let us know whether the millions of freemen of this nation are to get on their knees to Slavery at every Presidential election? [Applause.]

We know what Mr. Lincoln's Administration will be. We believe it will not be one year till the whole South, except the traitors bent on disunion any how, will hail the election of Mr. Lincoln as one of the greatest blessings. ["Good" and applause.] Without encroaching upon the rights of any State the Federal Government will withhold support to slavery in the Territories, and oppose its extension, and the reopening of the African slave trade. This will be an end to the slavery question. Indeed, the Republicans are the best friends of the South—they guarantee to the people of the slave States every Constitutional right, but claim for the Territories the policy which their own great statesmen inaugurated, and say that this great evil, the source of all our troubles, shall not be further spread into our Territories to curse and degrade them and their children, and us and our children, for a thousand years to come. Here we hold out to them the olive branch of an eternal peace; of a perpetual, unbroken union. [Applause.] Give Mr. Lincoln's Administration but a fair trial, and the South would soon settle down in the enjoyment of all her Constitutional rights; slavery extension and the slave traffic would cease; all the laws would be faithfully enforced; harmony would be restored, and a bright and eternal sunshine of union and peace smile on all the hill-sides and valleys of the land. [Applause.]

I cannot speak for Mr. Lincoln, nor do I know the emergencies he has to meet, but I have every confidence in his ability to meet, whatever crisis may come. I have known him too long and too well to doubt either his prudence or his courage. I know that every desire of his heart is for peace, but, if occur-

sion demands, South Carolina will find in him the true metal, the fire and flint, the pluck of old Hickory himself. [Tremendous applause.] I would disdain to utter the words of the mere political braggart, but, then, I do say, that while the most abundant caution should be used and the olive branch of peace and conciliation should be extended, yet the election of a President by a majority of the people is no excuse for treason, and that all the power of the Government should be brought to bear to crush it out wherever it shall rear its unsightly head. [Long and loud applause.]

For a quarter of a century or more have certain malcontents of the South, to subserve the vile purposes of personal ambition, set at naught the lessons of Washington and calculated the value of the Union. Now let it be, from this time henceforth, the united sentiment of all patriotic minds of America, without regard to party, that come what may, at all hazards, the spirit of disunion shall be so signally rebuked, that in all the years of the future it shall not dare to raise its hideous visage to mar the peace and quiet of the land. [Loud applause.]

I would not make lightly of the Union. As I look over our great country, our rivers and lakes, our free mountains and broad valleys, our flourishing commerce, our agriculture, reaping harvests such as the world never saw; our free civilization, striking its roots deep down into those principles of truth and justice, eternal as God,—as I look at our Government so free, our institutions so noble, our boundaries so broad, our beautiful sisterhood of common-wealths, united by the undying memories of the past, by the prosperity of the present, and by the precious hopes of the Union, I feel to exclaim:

"Sail on, oh! ship of State,
Thou, too, sail on! oh Union strong and great,
Humanity with all its fears
With all the hopes of countless years,
Is hanging breathless on thy fate!"

But in vain shall be this invocation if the Government is powerless to suppress treason, and if the suggestions of timidity and cowardice shall rule our national councils. [Applause.]

I repeat, that so firm is my belief in the integrity, in the purity of motives, in the patriotism of Mr. Lincoln; yea, I believe there is a Providence in it, and that Mr. Lincoln is raised up for this crisis, as Washington was for the Revolution. [So do I, from all parts of the crowd.] I believe that from the day of his inauguration will commence a new era—a career of new and wonderful progress—in which all sectional jealousies will be merged,

and the popular heart elevated to higher and nobler aims and all our great interests of commerce and agriculture advanced to a degree surpassing even the hitherto unparalleled progress of the country. I will not believe that this American Union is to be dissolved. I have too much faith in the people, in the Constitution, in freedom and humanity to believe any such thing. Before such an event shall be consummated, South Carolina and the politicians who have trifled, and blustered, and threatened, will find out the spirit of '76 is not finally extinct, and that there is an awful, frightful majesty in an uprisen people. [Loud applause.]

I rejoice with unspeakable joy in this great victory, because it tells us how good it is to stand up for the right. We can recollect when we were denounced as abolitionists, and our names cast out as evil for the utterance of the most patriotic and manly sentiments, but true to our country, we have lived to see that feeble minority become a majority, and truth, liberty, and the right gloriously triumph. And I say to my Republican friends to-night, your triumph is great because you have elected the man President who dares to plant himself with a feeble minority on the side of truth. [Applause.] You rejoice because you yourselves have dared, for the sake of principle, to face the false epithets of abolitionist and negro equality. And I am glad to say I have found it to be true, that if a man plants himself upon truth and the right, and with resolute and unflinching purpose pursues it, time and patience are only required to bring the American people to adopt it, and to reward him with sure and glorious triumph. [Loud applause.]

I say to my young friends, stand up for the right. If you would be on the strong side, be on the right side, for even in politics iniquity has its punishment. Example, Stephen A. Douglas. [Laughter and applause.] Virtue has her reward—example Abraham Lincoln. [Applause. Be on the right side, and I tell you God has implanted in the human heart the love of liberty, and the hatred of oppression. I tell you the people of a free State will vote for free labor and free Territory just as naturally as the water flows downward or the spark fly upward. [Applause.] I tell you it is sure as if God had written it in flaming fire on yonder sky that the party in this country which places itself on the immutable principle of human freedom, will triumph over all the opposing powers of slave domination and slave extension. [Loud applause and the crowd rose to their feet and gave cheer after cheer for the Governor elect.]

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